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The last photograph of O. Henry, taken by W. M. Vanderweyde (New York) in 1909

# THE O. HENRY INDEX

CONTAINING SOME LITTLE PICTURES OF O. HENRY TOGETHER WITH AN ALPHABETICAL GUIDE TO HIS COMPLETE WORKS

COMPILED BY  
E. F. SAXTON

ISSUED BY  
DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & COMPANY  
FROM THE COUNTRY LIFE PRESS IN  
GARDEN CITY                    NEW YORK



From a Portrait by W. H. Wallace, N. Y.

O. HENRY: PLAYING HIS HAND

O. HENRY  
(Died June 5, 1910)

*Five years . . . the pencil and the yellow pad  
Are laid away. Our changes run so swift  
That many newer pinnacles now lift  
Above the old four million he made glad.  
But still the heart of his well-loved Bagdad  
Upon-the-Subway is to him renewed.  
He knew, beneath her harmless platitude,  
The gentler secrets that the shopgirl had.*

*They mark the house on Irving Place FOR SALE;  
Disrupt the Union Square that once he knew,  
And necklace our Broadway with brighter lights;  
But where the pencil that can tell his tale?  
Or hands to write, as his alone could do,  
The stories of our Cabarabian Nights?*

—CHRISTOPHER MORLEY  
(Courtesy of the N. Y. Evening Post)

## INTRODUCTORY NOTE

ABOUT five years ago the project of an O. Henry biography and index was discussed for the first time. The biography was in the hands of Harry Peyton Steger, a friend of Sydney Porter's during the latter's lifetime and an indefatigable worker for the spread of O. Henry's fame after he died. It was Steger who visited, in 1912, every haunt of O. Henry in the South and brought to light a quantity of the *disjecta membra* of O. Henry's early literary efforts. These were later collected in the volume called "Rolling Stones."

¶ Steger's faith in the ultimate position which O. Henry would occupy in American literature was of the type

which moves mountains. A Texan and a Rhodes Scholar, he was by temperament, education and a large whimsicality of his own rather subtly attuned to O. Henry's moods and he probably did more than any other individual to lay the first foundations of O. Henry's popularity.

¶ Most unfortunately Harry Peyton Steger died in January 1913. The biographical work was taken up by Professor C. Alphonso Smith of the Department of English in the University of Virginia. Dr. Smith, who has been gathering material for a number of years, will have his volume ready in the course of the next year; his work will be the authoritative record of Sydney Porter's life with a valuable critical study of his writings.

¶ This little booklet makes no pretense to give more than a glimpse of O. Henry and a convenient guide to his books. The sketches by Mr. Arthur Page and Richard Duffy are reprinted through the courtesy of the authors and editors of *The Bookman*, in which they originally appeared with the illustrations. The Index is not for sale; it may be had by any one who requests it. For such as it is the compiler offers it as a tribute in friendship to H. P. S., who would have liked to see it done.

E. F. S.

# LITTLE PICTURES OF O. HENRY

By ARTHUR W. PAGE

## I — BORN AND “RAISED” IN NO’TH CA’LINA

*“The hero of the story will be a man born and ‘raised’ in a somnolent little Southern town. His education is about a common school, but he learns afterward from reading and life. I’m going to try to give him a style in narrative and speech — the best I’ve got in the shop.”*

These words are O. Henry’s own.

### I

IN Greensboro, North Carolina, at the time of Will Porter’s youth there were four classes of people: decent white folks, mean white folks, decent “niggers” and mean “niggers.” Will Porter and his people belonged to the first class. During the time that he was growing up there were about twenty-five hundred people in Greensboro. It was a simple democratic little place with rather more intellectual ambitions than most places of its size, but without the hum of modern industry which the cotton mills have latterly brought to it or the great swarm of eager students that now flock to the State Normal School.

In this quiet and pleasant community William Sydney Porter grew up. Algernon Sidney Porter, his father, was a doctor of skill and distinction, who in late life practised his profession little; but worked upon many inventions. His mother is said to have written poetry and her father was at one time editor of the Greensboro *Patriot*. A President, a planter, a banker, a blacksmith, a short-story writer or a sailor might any of them have such forbears as these.

If any dependence can be laid upon early “influences” that affect an author’s work, in O. Henry’s case we must certainly consider Aunt “Lina” Porter. She attended to his bringing up at home and he attended her instruction at school. His mother died when Will Porter was very young, and his aunt, Miss Evelina Porter,

ran the Porter household as well as the school next door, and a most remarkable school it was.

Porter's desk-mate in that school, Tom Tate, not long ago wrote the following account, for his niece to read:

"Miss Porter was a maiden lady and conducted a private school of West Market Street, in Greensboro, adjoining the Porter residence. Will was educated there, and this was his whole school education (with the exception of a term or two at graded school). There was a great deal more learned in this little one-story, one-roomed school-house than the three R's. It was the custom of 'Miss Lina,' as every one called her, during the recess hour to read aloud to those of her scholars who cared to hear her, and there was always a little group around her chair listening. She selected good books, and a great many of her old scholars showed the impress of these little readings in after life. On Friday night there was a gathering of the scholars at her home, and those were good times, too. They ate roasted chestnuts, popped corn or barbecued quail and rabbits before the big open wood fire in her room. There was always a book to read or a story to be told. Then there was a game of story-telling, one of the gathering would start the story and each one of the others was called on in turn to add his quota until the end. Miss Lina's and Will's were always interesting. In the summer time there were picnics and fishing expeditions; in the autumn chinquapin and hickory gatherings; and in the spring wild-flower hunts, all personally conducted by Miss Lina.

"During these days Will showed decided artistic talent, and it was predicted that he would follow in the footsteps of his kinsman, Tom Worth, the cartoonist, but the literary instinct was there, too, and the quaint dry humor and the keen insight into the peculiarities of human nature.

"The boys of the school were divided in two clubs, the Brickbats and the Union Jacks. The members of the Union Jacks were Percy Gray, Will Porter, Jim Doak and Tom Tate, three of whom died before reaching middle age. Tom Tate is the sole survivor of this little party of four.

"This club had headquarters in an outbuilding on the grounds of the old Edgeworth Female College, which some years previously had been destroyed by fire. In this house they kept their arms and accoutrements, consisting of wooden battle-axes, shields, and

old cavalry sabres, and on Friday nights it was their custom to sally forth armed and equipped in search of adventure, like knights of old from their castle, carefully avoiding the dark nooks where the moonlight did not fall. Will was the leading spirit in these daring pursuits, and many was the hair-raising adventure these ten-year-old heroes encountered, and the shields and battle-axes were oftentimes thrown aside so as not to impede the free action of the nether limbs when safety lay only in flight. Ghosts were of common occurrence in those days, or rather nights, and arms were useless to cope with the supernatural; it took good sturdy legs.

"After the short school-days Porter found employment as prescription clerk in the drugstore of his uncle, Clarke Porter, and it was there that his genius as an artist and writer budded forth and gave the first promise of the work of after years. The old Porter drugstore was the social club of the town in those days. A game of chess went on in the back room always, and around the old stove behind the prescription counter the judge, the colonel, the doctor and other local celebrities gathered and discussed affairs of state, the fate of nations and other things and incidentally helped themselves to liberal portions of Clarke's Vini Gallaci or smoked his cigars without money and without price. There were some rare characters who gathered around that old stove, some queer personalities, and Porter caught them and transferred them to paper by both pen and pencil in an illustrated comedy satire that was his first public literary and artistic effort.

"When this was read and shown around the stove the picture was so true to life and caught the peculiarities of the *dramatis personæ* so aptly it was some time before the young playwright was on speaking terms with some of his old friends. 'Alias Jimmy Valentine's' hit is history now, but I doubt if at any time there was a more genuine tribute to Porter's ability than from the audience around the old stove, behind the prescription counter nearly thirty years ago.

"In those days Sunday was a day of rest, and Porter with a friend would spend the long afternoons out on some sunny hillside sheltered from the wind by the thick brown broom sedge, lying on their backs gazing up into the blue sky dreaming, planning, talking or turning to their books, reading. He was an ardent lover of God's great out-of-doors, a dreamer, a thinker and a constant reader. He

was such a man — true-hearted and steadfast to those he cared for, as gentle and sensitive as a woman, retiring to a fault, pure, clean and honorable."

In these characteristics Will Porter followed in his father's footsteps. It was a saying in Greensboro that if there were cushioned seats in Heaven old Dr. Porter would have one, because of his charity and goodness to the poor. And there was an active sympathy between the old man and his son. The old gentleman on cold stormy nights when his boy was late getting home from the drugstore always had a roaring wood fire for him, and a pot of coffee and potatoes and eggs warming in the fire for his midnight supper.

His pencil was busy most of the time, if not with writing, with drawing. He was a famous cartoonist. There are several versions of the story about him and an important customer at his uncle's store. Young Porter did not remember the customer's name, but when the man asked him to charge some articles he did not wish to admit his ignorance. So he put down the items and drew a picture of the customer. His uncle had no difficulty in recognizing the likeness.

In 1881 Dr. and Mrs. J. K. Hall went to Texas to visit their sons, Richard and Lee Hall, of Texas-ranger fame, and Will Porter was sent with them, because it was thought that the close confinement in the drugstore was undermining his health. He never again lived in Greensboro, but Greensboro was never altogether out of his mind. Many years later, when he was living in New York, he wrote this account of himself — an account which gives an inkling of the whimsical charm of the man and his fondness for the old life in the old land of his birth.

"I was born and raised in 'No'th Ca'lina' and at eighteen went to Texas and ran wild on the prairies. Wild yet, but not so wild. Can't get to loving New Yorkers. Live all alone in a great big two rooms on quiet old Irving Place three doors from Wash. Irving's old home. Kind of lonesome. Was thinking lately (since the April moon commenced to shine) how I'd like to be down South, where I could happen over to Miss Ethel's or Miss Sallie's and sit on the porch — not on a chair — on the edge of the porch, and lay my straw hat on the steps and lay my head back against the honeysuckle on the post — and just talk. And Miss Ethel would go in directly

(they say presently up here) and bring out the guitar. She would complain that the E string was broken, but no one would believe her and pretty soon all of us would be singing the 'Swanee River' and 'In the Evening by the Moonlight' and — oh, gol darn it, what's the use of wishing."

#### PART II — TEXAN DAYS

WILL PORTER found a new kind of life in Texas — a life that filled his mind with that rich variety of types and adventures which later was translated into his stories. Here he got — from observation, and not from experience, as has often been said, for he was never a cowboy — the originals of his Western characters and Western scenes. He looked on at the more picturesque life about him rather than shared in it; though through his warm sympathy and his vivid imagination he entered into its spirit as completely as any one who had fully lived its varied parts.

It was while he was living on the Hall ranch, to which he had gone in search of health, that he wrote — and at once destroyed — his first stories of Western life. And it was there, too, that he drew the now famous series of illustrations for a book that never was printed. The author of that book, "Uncle Joe" Dixon, was a prospector in the bonanza mining days in Colorado. Now he is a newspaper editor in Florida; and he has lately told, for the survivors of Will Porter's friends of that period, the story of the origin of these drawings. His narrative illustrates anew the remarkable impression that Will Porter's quaint and whimsical personality even in his boyhood, made upon those who knew him.

Other friends, who knew him more intimately than "Uncle Joe" Dixon, saw other sides of Will Porter's character. With them his boyish love of fun and of good-natured and sometimes daredevil mischief came again to the surface, as well as those refinements of feeling and manner that were his heritage as one of the "decent white folks" of Greensboro. And with them, too, came out the ironical fate that pursued him most of his life — to be a dreamer and yet to be harnessed to tasks that brought his head from the clouds to the commonplaces of the store and the street. Perhaps it was this very bending of a sky-seeking imagination to the dusty comedy of every day that brought him later to see life as he pictured it in "The Four Million," with its mingling of Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid's romance with the adventures of shop-girls and restaurant

keepers. At any rate, even the Texas of the drug-clerk days and of the bank-clerk period appealed to his sense of the humorous and romantic and grotesque. Here is what one intimate of those days recalls of his character and exploits:

"Will Porter, shortly after coming to Texas became a member of the Hill City Quartette, of Austin, composed of C. E. Hillyer, R. H. Edmundson, Howard Long and himself. Porter was the littlest man in the crowd, and, of course, basso profundo. He was about five feet six inches tall, weighed about one hundred and thirty pounds, had coal black hair, gray eyes, and a long, carefully twisted moustache; looked as though he might be a combination between the French and the Spanish, and I think he once told me that the blood of the Huguenot flowed in his veins. He was one of the most accomplished gentlemen I ever knew. His voice was soft and musical, with just enough rattle in it to rid it of all touch of effeminacy. He had a keen sense of humor, and there were two distinct methods of address which was characteristic with him — his business address and his friendly address. As a business man, his face was calm, almost expressionless; his demeanor was steady, even calculated. He always worked for a high class of employers, was never wanting for a position, and was prompt, accurate, talented and very efficient; but the minute he was out of business — that was all gone. He always approached a friend with a merry twinkle in his eye and an expression which said: 'Come on, boys, we are going to have a lot of fun,' and we usually did.

"If W. S. P. at this time had any ambitions as a writer, he never mentioned it to me. I do not recall that he was fond of reading. One day I quoted some lines to him from a poem by John Alexander Smith. He made inquiry about the author, borrowed the book and committed to memory a great many passages from it, but I do not recall ever having known him to read any other book. I asked him one day why he never read fiction. His reply was: 'That it was all tame compared with the romance in his own life,' — which was really true.

"In the great railroad strike at Fort Worth, Texas, the Governor called out the State Militia, and the company to which we belonged was sent, but as we were permitted a choice in the matter, Porter and I chose not to go. In a little while a girl he was in love with went to Waco on a visit. Porter moped around disconsolate



O. HENRY'S  
FATHER



O HENRY  
AT THE  
AGE OF 6

PAGE FROM

# THE PLUNKVILLE PATRIOT.

VOL. XXI.

PLUNKVILLE TEX APRIL 20TH 1895

NO IX.

**The Plunkville Patriot,**  
Published every Friday.  
COL. ARISTOULE JORDAN,  
Editor & MAYOR

Office after Feb. 1st; Back of  
Grimes' slaughter pens, two doors  
north of Caney Creek.

Subscription per year - \$1.00  
" " 6 mos. ; .50

write Up for candidates 5¢ per line.  
Obituary poetry - 10¢ "

R. R. timetable.  
N. bound arr. Plunkville 7:15 AM  
" leaves " 7:55 "

Spring has come.

Bob Taylor and Sue Billings were married at 11 a. M. yesterday.

The affair took place in Mr. church S by S. W. The building was decorated with evergreens and roses, over the pulpit was an immense bell made of brass and old headboards. The groom was decked up by Pete Schieber Williams and a young man from Pikeville they called canary. Mrs. Pendergrast played a dead march on the organ as the gaudy diddeake walk up the aisle.

When upon this stage a poor adog boy plied and was the picture of all eyes. Bob had on his usual Zans and his brotherfins, Prince Albert.

The happy couple had a feed at old man Billings, and then begged the 15¢ freight for a three days bridge trip.

Bob is rather trifling, and the chances are that old Billings will grieve son instead of losing a daughter. Viva Bobism!

PATRONIZE THE ELITE SALOON

Cold beer always on tap.  
Back door opened on 3 taps Sunday.

## VICTORY!!

FORCING ON THE BANNER OF  
MAYOR JORDAN

And good Government

PERKING HOG-PEN SOUSADED

by a major corporal & so Aze-

perkins Makes A Bold resistance!

The HOG takes a stand in the proce-

ding.

1900 People on the Ground.

(Special report by US for the Patriot.)

Plunkville, April 27th—Wednesday

began about daylight, and people on horseback and all kinds of vehicles began to come in town. The day had been advertised as 1½ one when we, as Mayors should forego remove the disgusting hog-pen of Judge Perkin's that front along our principal

street—Belle Meade Avenue.

About 8 o'clock we walked down the Avenue officially, we simple Col. Jordan to get tidings of the field.

There were about you country people on the ground eating apples and pop-sops and liberally partaking

the lemonade and good brick stan-

gels. We nestled over at \$ by selling privileges for same.

After a light breakfast of a bottle of beer and a piece of lemon pie, we swung Indian clubs for 10 minutes and then washed our face and carefully read over the Marquis of Queensbury's rules.

At first minute to 8 we sailed off on our mission carrying a copy of the Revised Statutes, a pair of brassknucks, an ax and about 7 coconuts.

When we got to Belle Meade Avenue a cheer went up from at least 1000 people. All the stores were closed and the whole town was there to see the fun. The hog pen was stiff there enclosing a large, supercilious hog,

so decidedly bad odor, about 14 hands high.

Judge Perkins sat on the edge of the pen barefooted; with a long, single-barreled shotgun in his hand. He was breathing hard, and his big toes were working viciously.

As we walked up in front of the Judge there was an intense silence.

We had the Revised Statutes on a peasant stand, shifted and set round, and kept an eye on the Judge's gun.

"Judge Perkins," we said in a loud voice, "by the authority invested in

us by the Commonwealth of Plunkville and the power of the Press, we command you to remove, take away, absquatulate and disperse yourself and all所述 hog contrary to the

peace and dignity of the State of Texas until death do you part, so help you God!"

"Go to h---l" says the Judge.

We were about to spin a few rounds but guessed foolish our month too far,

when a little dog from the counter

seizing the hog's tail protruding through the pen, bit off about 2 inches

of some. The hog gave a squeal that started the J. he pulled the trigger and his gun discharged taking off his left forearm and killing a cub

Mrs. Col. Doggett. We sprang forward with our bat and quickly smacked the heads of the pen. The hog

saw the opening and remaking "Wood" in deep barking voice, shot though the hole.

An eye witness tells on that Judge Perkins was standing on one foot outside smash on in the back of the head with his barrel when a load of deep bruiser hog, with a Maud escape movement passed between his legs.

Mrs. Col. Doggett struck the Judge just as he struck the sidewalk, and while she was jabbing him with her parasol we demolished the rest of the pen.

The hog spent the lemonade and beer stands, pied the flying Jenny and the High School grapevining claim, and

then struck up Lacey creek in a north westerly direction.

We were escorted at once to the Elec by a crowd of cheering citizens who had witnessed the downfall of Monopoly and Despotism in Plunkville. Pete Dodging made a speech nominating us New Governor in 1896, but this we consider a little premature.

Judge Perkins will be out again in about three weeks.

## IN MEMORIAM.

We received a telegram just before going to press, announcing the death of our mother in Branchtown, Ga. She was the best woman in the world, and the only being who has loved and taken any interest in us. She was very poor, and we have for ten years seen her all our slender income beyond our actual needs.

We know that we are uneducated and not a genius, having had to work hard since we were ten years of age, but we have made a big birth and have always succeeded in keeping her in comfort, and, thank God, she always believed in us. Our friends will pardon us for dragging so personal affairs, but we feel lonely, and we have very little to encourage us now the world.

She always kept each copy of this poor little paper, and read it as it were a fountain of the brightest wisdom, and laid them away reverently, thinking her bosom one of the greatest.

We shall continue in our line of duty, but a little sadly, for the only hand that has ever pressed ours with love is gone, and the only lips that ever whispered words of praise are silent.

## Widows!

Send your name, height, weight, reach inches around biceps and forearm &c \$4.75, and receive by return mail a picture of your last husband, free!

Mrs. John Spalding, Madison, New York.

O. HENRY HIMSELF ALWAYS WENT OVER THE TYPE OF THIS PAGE (A FEATURE OF *THE ROLLING STONE*) AND CAREFULLY MADE THE RIGHT KIND OF TYPOGRAPHICAL ERRORS.

for a few days, and suddenly said to me: 'I believe I'll take a visit at the Government's expense.' With him to think was to act. A telegram was sent to Fort Worth: 'Capt. Blank, Fort Worth, Texas. Squad of volunteers Company Blank, under my command tender you their services if needed. Reply.' 'Come next train,' Captain Blank commanded. Upon reaching the depot no orders for transportation of squad had been received. Porter actually held up the train until he could telegraph and get transportation for his little squad, because the girl had been notified that he would be in Waco on a certain train. She afterward said that when the train pulled into Waco he was sitting on the engine pilot with a gun across his lap and a distant glance at her was all that he got, but he had had his adventure and was fully repaid.

"This adventure, is only one of thousands of such incidents that commonly occurred in his life. He lived in an atmosphere of adventure that was the product of his own imagination. He was an inveterate story-teller, seemingly purely from the pleasure of it, but he never told a vulgar joke, and as much as he loved humor he would not sacrifice decency for its sake and his stories about women were always refined.

"He told a great many stories in the first person. We were often puzzled to know whether they were real or imaginary, and when we made inquiry his stock reply was: 'Never question the validity of a joke.'"

But the lure of the pen was getting too strong for Will Porter to resist. Life as a teller in the First National Bank of Austin was too routine not to be relieved by some outlet for his love of fun and for his creative literary instinct. An opportunity opened to buy a printing outfit, and he seized it and used it for a year to issue the *Rolling Stone*, a weekly paper that suggested even then his later method as a humorist and as a photographic portrayer of odd types of humanity. Dr. D. Daniels — "Dixie" he was to Will Porter — now a dentist in Galveston, Texas, was his partner in this enterprise, and his story of that year of fun gives also a picture of Will Porter's habit of studying human nature at first hand — a habit that later carried him into many quaint byways of New York and into many even more quaint and revealing byways of the human heart. Here is Dr. Daniels's story:

"It was in the spring of 1894 that I floated into Austin," said Dan-

ies, "and I got a place in the State printing office. I had been working there for a short time when I heard that a man named Porter had bought out the old *Iconoclast* plant — known everywhere as Brann's *Iconoclast* — and was looking for a printer to go into the game with him. I went around to see him, and that was the first time I met O. Henry. Porter had been a clerk in the Texas Land Office and a teller in the First National Bank in Austin, and when W. C. Brann went to Waco decided to buy out his plant and run a weekly humorous paper.

"I talked things over with him, the proposition looked good, and we formed a partnership then and there. We christened the paper the *Rolling Stone* after a few discussions, and in smaller type across the full-page head we printed 'Out for the moss.' Which is exactly what we were out for. Our idea was to run this weekly with a lot of current events treated in humorous fashion, and also to run short sketches, drawings and verse. I had been doing a lot of chalk-plate work and the specimens I showed seemed to make a hit with Porter. Those chalk-plates were the way practically all of our cuts were printed.

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"Porter was one of the most versatile men I had ever met. He was a fine singer, could write remarkably clever stuff under all circumstances and was a good hand at sketching. And he was the best mimic I ever saw in my life. He was one of the genuine democrats that you hear about more often than you meet. Night after night, after we would shut up shop, he would call to me to come along and 'go bumming.' That was his favorite expression for the night-time prowling in which we indulged. We would wander through streets and alleys, meeting with some of the worst specimens of down-and-outers it has ever been my privilege to see at close range. I've seen the most ragged specimen of a bum hold up Porter, who would always do anything he could for the man. His one great failing was his inability to say 'No' to a man.

"He never cared for the so-called 'higher classes' but watched the people on the streets and in the shops and cafés, getting his ideas from them night after night. I think that it was in this way he was able to picture the average man with such marvellous fidelity.

"Well, as I started to say, we moved into the old *Iconoclast* plant, got out a few issues, and moved into the Brueggerhoff building. The *Rolling Stone* met with unusual success at the start, and

we had in our files letters from men like Bill Nye and John Kendrick Bangs praising us for the quality of the sheet. We were doing nicely, getting the paper out every Saturday — approximately — and blowing the gross receipts every night. Then we began to strike snags! One of our features was a series of cuts with humorous underlines of verse. One of the cuts was the rear view of a fat German professor leading an orchestra, beating the air wildly with his baton. Underneath the cut Porter had written the following verse:

With his baton the professor beats the bars,  
'Tis also said beats them when he treats.  
But it made that German gentleman see stars  
When the houncker got the cue to bar the beats.

"For some reason or other that issue alienated every German in Austin from the *Rolling Stone*, and cost us more than we were able to figure out in subscriptions and advertisements.

"We got out one feature of the paper that used to meet with pretty general approval. It was a page gotten up in imitation of a back-woods country paper, and we christened it 'The Plunkville Patriot.' That idea has been carried out since then in a dozen different forms, like 'The Hogwallow Kentuckian,' and 'The Bingville Bugle,' to give two of the prominent examples. Porter and I used to work on this part of the paper nights and Sundays. I would set the type for it, as there was a system to all of the typographical errors that we made, and I couldn't trust any one else to set it up as we wanted it.

"The paper ran along for something over a year, and then was discontinued. Following the political trouble and the other troubles in which Porter became involved, he left the State. Some time was spent in Houston; the next stop was New Orleans; then he jumped to South America, and only returned to Texas for a short period before leaving the State forever. His experiences on a West Texas ranch, in Texas cities and in South America, however, gave him a thorough insight into the average run of people whom he pictured so vividly in his later work. He was a greater man than any of us knew when we were with him in the old days."

### III — THE NEW YORK DAYS — RICHARD DUFFY'S NARRATIVE

His coming to New York, with the resolution "to write for bread," as he said once in a mood of acrid humor, was dramatic, as is a whisper compared to a subdued tumult of voices.. I be-

lieve I am correct in saying that outside his immediate family few were aware that O. Henry was entering this "nine-day town" except Gilman Hall, my associate on *Ainslee's Magazine*, the publishers, Messrs. Street and Smith, and myself. For some time we had been buying stories from him, written in his perfect Spencerian copperplate hand that was to become familiar to so many editors. Only then he wrote always with a pen on white paper, whereas once he was established in New York he used a lead pencil sharpened to a needle's point on one of the yellow pads that were always to be seen on his table. The stories he published at this period were laid either in the Southwest or in Central America, and those of the latter countries form the bulk of his first issued volume, "Cabbages and Kings." It was because we were sure of him as a writer that our publishers willingly advanced the cheque that brought him to New York and assured him a short breathing spell to look round and settle. Also, it was because O. Henry wanted to come. You could always make him do anything he wanted to do, as he had a way of saying, if you were coaxing him into an invitation he had no intention of pursuing into effect.

It was getting late on a fine spring afternoon down at Duane and William Streets when he came to meet us. From the outer gate the boy presented a card bearing the name William Sydney Porter. I don't remember just when we found out that "O. Henry" was merely a pen-name; but think it was during the correspondence arranging that he come to New York. I do remember, however, that when we were preparing our yearly prospectus, we had written to him, asking that he tell us what the initial O. stood for, as we wished to use his photograph and preferred to have his name in full. It was the custom and would make his name stick faster in the minds of readers. With a courteous flourish of appreciation at the honor we were offering him in making him known to the world, he sent us "Olivier," and so he appeared as Olivier Henry in the first publishers' announcement in which his stories were heralded. Later he confided to us, smiling, what a lot of fun he had had in picking out a first name of sufficient advertising effectiveness that began with O.

As happens in these matters, whatever mind picture Gilman Hall or I had formed of him from his letters, his handwriting, his stories, vanished before the impression of the actual man. He wore a

dark suit of clothes, I recall, and a four-in-hand tie of bright color. He carried a black derby, high-crowned, and walked with a springy, noiseless step. To meet him for the first time you felt his most notable quality to be reticence, not a reticence of social timidity, but a reticence of deliberateness. If you also were observing, you would soon understand that his reticence proceeded from the fact that civilly yet masterfully he was taking in every item of the "you" being presented to him to the accompaniment of convention's phrases and ideas, together with the "you" behind this presentation. It was because he was able thus to assemble and sift all the multifarious elements of a personality with sleight-of-hand swiftness that you find him characterizing a person or a neighborhood in a sentence or two; and once I heard him characterize a list of editors he knew each in a phrase.

On his first afternoon in New York we took him on our usual walk uptown from Duane Street to about Madison Square. That was a long walk for O. Henry, as any who knew him may witness. Another long one was when he walked about a mile over a fairly high hill with me on zigzag path through autumn woods. I showed him plains below us and hills stretching away so far and blue they look like the illimitable sea from the deck of an ocean liner. But it was not until we approached the station from which we were to take the train back to New York that he showed the least sign of animation. "What's the matter, Bill," I asked, "I thought you'd like to see some real country." His answer was: "Kunn'l, how kin you expeck me to appreciate the glories of nature when you walk me over a mounting like that an' I got new shoes on?" Then he stood on one foot and on the other, caressing each aching member for a second or two, and smiled with bashful knowingness so like him.

It was one of his whimsical amusements, I must say here, to speak in a kind of country style of English, as though the English language were an instrument he handled with hesitant unfamiliarity. Thus it happened that a woman who had written to him about his stories and asked if her "lady friend" and she might meet him, informed him afterward: "You mortified me nearly to death, you talked so ungrammatical!"

We never knew just where he stopped the first night in New York, beyond his statement that it was at a hotel not far from the ferry in a neighborhood of so much noise that he had not been able to

sleep. I suppose we were voluminous with suggestions as to where he might care to live, because we felt we had some knowledge of the subject of board and lodging, and because he was the kind of man you'd give your best hat to on short acquaintance, if he needed a hat, — but also he was the kind of man who would get a hat for himself. Within about twenty-four hours he called at the office again to say that he had taken a large room in a French table d'hôte hotel in Twenty-fourth Street, between Broadway and Sixth Avenue. Moreover, he brought us a story. In those days he was very prolific. He wrote not only stories, but occasional skits and light verse. In a single number of *Ainslee's*, as I remember, we had three short stories of his, one of which was signed "O. Henry" and the other two with pseudonyms. Of the latter, "While the Auto Waits" was picked out by several newspapers outside New York as an unusually clever short story. But as O. Henry naturally he appeared most frequently, as frequently as monthly publication allows, for to my best recollection, of the many stories we saw of his there were only three about which we said to him, we would rather have another instead.

Still he lived in West Twenty-fourth Street, although the place had no particular fascination for him. We used to see him every other day or so, at luncheon, at dinner, or in the evening. Various magazine editors began to look up O. Henry, which was a job somewhat akin to tracing a lost person. While his work was coming under general notice rapidly, he made no effort to push himself into general acquaintance; and all who knew him when he was actually somewhat of a celebrity should be able to say that it was about as easy to induce him to "go anywhere" to meet somebody as it is to have a child take medicine. He was persuaded once to be the guest of a member of the Periodical Publishers' Association on a sail up the Hudson; but when the boat made a stop at Poughkeepsie, O. Henry slipped ashore and took the first train back to New York. Yet he was not unsociable, but a man that liked a few friends round him and who dreaded and avoided a so-called "party" as he did a crowd in the subway.

It was at his Twenty-fourth Street room that Robert H. Davis, then of the staff of the *New York World*, ran him to cover, as it were, and concluded a contract with him to furnish one story a week for a year at a fixed salary. It was a gigantic task to face,

and I have heard of no other writer who put the same quality of effort and material in his work able to produce one story every seven days for fifty-two successive weeks. The contract was renewed, I believe, and all during this time O. Henry was selling stories to magazines as well. His total of stories amount to two hundred and fifty-one, and when it is considered that they were written in about eight years, one may give him a good mark for industry, especially as he made no professional vaunt about "loving his work." Once when dispirited he said that almost any other way of earning a living was less of a toil than writing. The mood is common to writers, but not so common as to happen to a man who practically had editors or agents of editors sitting on his doorstep requesting copy.

When he undertook his contract with the *World* he moved to have more room and more comfortable surroundings for the new job. But he did not move far, no farther than across Madison Square, in East Twenty-fourth Street, to a house near Fourth Avenue. Across the street stands the Metropolitan Building, although it was not so vast then. He had a bedroom and sitting-room at the rear of the parlor floor with a window that looked out on a typical New York yard, boasting one ailanthus tree frowned upon by time-stained extension walls of other houses. More and more men began to seek him out, and he was glad to see them, for a good deal of loneliness enters into the life of a man that writes fiction during the better part of the day, and when his work is over feels he must move about somewhere to gather new material. Here it was that he received a visit one day from a stranger, who announced that he was a business man, but had decided to change his line. He meant to write stories, and having read several of O. Henry's, he was convinced that kind of story would be the best paying proposition. O. Henry liked the man off-hand, but he could not help being amused at his attitude toward a "literary career." I asked what advice he gave the visitor, and he answered: "I told him to go ahead!" The sequel no doubt O. Henry thoroughly enjoyed, for within a few years the stranger had become a best-seller, and continues such.

O. Henry remained only for a few months in these lodgings, having among a dozen reasons for moving the fact that he had more money.

I follow his movings with his trunks, his bags, his books, a few,

but books he read, and his pictures, likewise a few, that were original drawings presented to him, or some familiar printed picture that had caught his fancy, because in his movings you trace his life in New York. His next abiding-place was at 55 Irving Place, as he has said in a letter, "a few doors from old Wash. Irving's house." Here he had almost the entire parlor floor with a window large as a store front, opening only at the sides in long panels. At either one of these panels he would sit for hours watching the world go by along the street, not gazing idly, but noting men and women with penetrating eyes, making guesses at what they did for a living, and what fun they got out of it when they had earned it.

He was a man you could sit with a long while and feel no necessity for talking; but ever so often a passerby would evoke a remark from him that converted an iota of humanity into the embryo of a story. Although he spoke hardly ever to any one in the house except the people who managed it, he had the lodgers all ticketed in his mind. He was friendly but distant with persons of the neighborhood he was bound to meet regularly, because he lived so long there, and I have often thought he must have persisted as a mysterious man to them simply because he was so far from being communicative.

From Irving Place he went back across the Square to live in a house next to the rectory of Trinity Chapel in West Twenty-fifth Street. But now he moved because the land lady and several lodgers were moving to the same house. From here his next change was to the Caledonia, in West Twenty-sixth Street, whence, as everybody knows, he made his last move to the Polyclinic Hospital, where he died.

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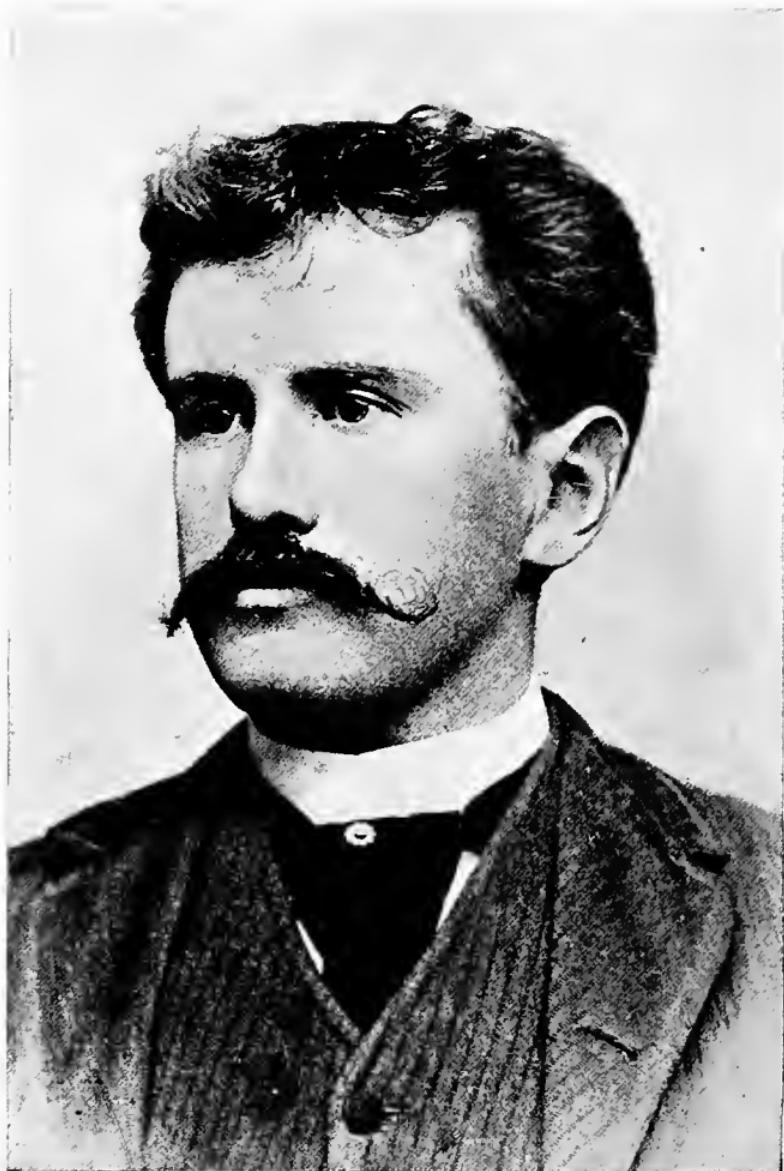
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